

**Teleconference / MS Teams Meeting**

Abrams Building, Room 2359

3950 S. Country Club Road

Tucson, Arizona 85714

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

Dr. Horwitz called meeting to order at 3:02 P.M.

**ATTENDANCE:**

Mr. Bin An - Absent

Dr. Matt Heinz - joined after roll call

Mr. Rene Gastelum - Absent

Mr. Charles Geoffrion, Vice President

Ms. Mary Lou Gonzales

Dr. Paul Horwitz, President

Mr. Mike Humphrey

Dr. Kathryn Kohler

Mr. Miguel Rojas - Absent

Dr. Gail Smith

Ms. Carolyn Trowbridge - joined after roll call

**A quorum was established (6)**

**Non-Board Members**

Dr. Theresa Cullen, Pima County Health, Director

Ms. Paula Mandel, Pima County Health, Deputy Director

**Presenters**

Mr. Mark Persons, Pima County Health, Program Manager

Mr. Louie Valenzuela, Pima County Health, Public Health Assessment and Preparedness Division Manager

Ms. Jennie Mullins, Pima County Health, Administrative Support Services Manager

**2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Due to Teleconference Meeting the Pledge of Allegiance was not conducted.

**3. MINUTES ADOPTION**

- Adopted Board of Health June 16, 2021 Meeting Minutes.

The motion was made and seconded (Mr. Geoffrion/Ms. Trowbridge) that the June 16, 2021, Board of Health (BOH) Minutes be adopted. The motion passed unanimously.

- Adopted Officer Nominating Committee August 4, 2021 Meeting Minutes.

The motion was made and seconded (Dr. Kohler/Dr. Horwitz) that the August 4, 2021, BOH Officer Nominating Committee Minutes be adopted. The motion passed unanimously.

**4. CALL TO AUDIENCE**

- Dr. Horwitz noted that three people are participating in the Call to Audience. He advised each speaker to state his or her name and the issue to speak about. He also advised that they will each have 3 minutes to speak on anything they wish, and that the Board of Health (BOH) cannot comment on their remarks or answer any questions.
- The first speaker was Nancy Bowman, a nurse and member of the group Citizens For A Safer Pima County, who spoke about the issue of gun violence and gun safety that is on the BOH agenda today. Ms. Bowman described her experience working with a documentary crew that came to Tucson to attend the Crossroads of the West Gun Show held at the Pima

County Fairgrounds. As part of the documentary, Ms. Bowman was able to purchase a variety of lethal weapons at the gun show for cash, without needing to provide any information for a background check, or a weapons permit, and received no receipt for any of the sales. Ms. Bowman noted that all of those sales were legal purchases in Pima County. Ms. Bowman stated that gun violence is a public health emergency, and urged the BOH to act on addressing it now.

- The second speaker was Molly McKasson, a member of the group Citizens For A Safer Pima County, who also spoke about agenda item number 7. Ms. McKasson noted that she has been involved with gun safety since her days on the City of Tucson Council in the 1990's. She has worked locally on the issue of universal background checks and pursuing a ban on assault weapons following the tragic Sandy Hook Elementary shooting in December 2012. Ms. McKasson believes there is currently strong support among the Board of Supervisors (BOS) to ensure public safety and examine procedures and requirements at gun shows within the County. Ms. McKasson thanked the BOH for taking up this issue, and believes that passing along the resolution on today's agenda to the BOS will be extremely helpful.
- The third speaker was Mr. Larry Bodine, a Tucson resident and retired attorney who also spoke in favor of item number 7. Mr. Bodine stated that from his perspective the gun show at the Pima County Fairgrounds is an open arms bazaar where felons, domestic abusers, and potentially people experiencing mental illness can buy guns for cash without any background checks in a private, undocumented sale. Mr. Bodine noted that he is aware that most of the gun show dealers do not have a Federal Firearms License (FFL), and that convicted felons are able to operate at the gun show currently. Mr. Bodine stated that he believes there is a public health emergency in allowing unlicensed dealers to sell guns on public property, and there is a need to have only FFL dealers for the safety and health of the community.
- Dr. Horwitz thanked each speaker for their comments, reminded them that the BOH cannot respond to their input and advised that the BOH will take it under advisement.

**5. BOARD OF HEALTH NOMINATING COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS ELECTION**  
**BOARD OF HEALTH OFFICERS**

- Dr. Horwitz thanked the nominating committee - Dr. Kay Kohler, Mr. Rene Gastelum, and Mr. Miguel Rojas - for their work, announced the final votes for the position of President, and Vice President, of the BOH, and congratulated the winners:
  - President: Dr. Paul Horwitz
  - Vice President: Mr. Charles Geoffrion.

**6. DIRECTOR'S UPDATE**

- Dr. Cullen introduced Mr. Victor (Vic) Pereira, Pima County Health Department's new Deputy Director of Operations, who will oversee all operations for the Health Department. The Cross Functional Division and Business Operations (Finance) Division will report directly to him. Mr. Pereira recently retired from the military after 30 years of service. He is a helicopter pilot and was the Vice Wing Commander at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base for the past 2 years. Mr. Pereira lives in Vail with his wife and two daughters. The Board welcomed him to his new position with the department.
- Dr. Cullen provided a COVID-19 update for Pima County:

Current statistics:

- The County is now seeing over 150 cases per 100K; we are at high rate of community transmission; and the testing positivity rate is now over 10%.
- Testing demand is increasing, and the department is boosting testing capacity.

- Schools in the County as of today have had 29 outbreaks and 765 cases total since July; we have increased capacity of our school-based team to respond.
- We are seeing increasing percentage of the Delta variant through genetic sequencing.
- Dr. Cullen issued a public health advisory on August 17, 2021 regarding hospital bed capacity status, and noted that two of our hospitals are consistently operating under CODE Purple (transferring patients around to make ICU beds available), and one has been in CODE White (delayed off-loading of patients from ambulances into the emergency room). Dr. Cullen is concerned that area hospitals may end up in crisis due to a health care worker and staffing shortages that is not unique to Pima County.
- Concerning school response, Dr. Cullen advised that she has the final determination to close a classroom based on information provided by the school-based team. Mr. Geoffrion asked for more detail on what criteria is needed to make the decision to close a classroom. Dr. Cullen noted that she has the authority through the Sanitary Measure released in July, which is aligned with the public health authority to declare an outbreak and then a secondary closure. Closure is based on the amount of cases seen in the classroom, the layout of the classroom, the ventilation in the classroom, and the number of cases that are EPI-linked to the school. The information is evaluated and a video conference is held with the facility, the principal and the superintendent (as applicable). Schools are sending out standard letters to parents and guardians of students in classrooms that have cases or exposures to provide guidance on their status (case or contact), quarantine information, date of release from quarantine, and a test date recommendation.
- Dr. Cullen provided an update on vaccinations:
  - Pima County has reached 73.5% of its residents 18 and over who have received a first shot. This is 10 percentage points above Maricopa County.
  - The CDC and White House released guidance recommending a third, booster shot for immunocompromised individuals today. Booster shots for eligible individuals will be available at all Pima County Health Department (PCHD) clinics, as well as at local pharmacies. There is also new guidance recommending vaccinated individuals receive booster shots after eight months of completing their first series. PCHD had no prior warning of this recommendation and is the process of developing a response plan to distribute third shots to the broader community.
  - PCHD are engaging additional approved vendors to come in to the community to provide vaccinations. These vendors have been on contract with the Arizona Department of Health Services, which will help the county to cost-shift to the State, or the Feds.
- Dr. Cullen advised that in order to fill positions available through our new grants, a hiring fair would be held at Abrams and online on September 11. There are currently 35 grant-funded positions open through the health literacy, health equity for testing and health equity for vaccines grants.
- Dr. Cullen noted that PCHD received a BRACE grant from Arizona department of Health Services, to address heat-related public health issues. Mr. Louie Valenzuela will provide an update later in this meeting.
- Dr. Cullen noted that the Strategic Plan has gone through internal review, and would like to present it to the BOH at the September meeting.

## **7. REDUCING GUN VIOLENCE**

- Mr. Mike Humphrey read a statement providing additional information pertaining to the draft resolution in support of requiring background checks for all firearms sold on Pima County-owned property. Mr. Humphrey noted that activities occurring at the gun show held at the Pima County Fairgrounds are a threat to public health and safety, and referred back to Ms. Nancy Bowman's account of being able to purchase firearms at the gun show without

identifying whether or not she was a prohibited possessor, straw purchaser, or gun trafficker. Mr. Humphrey also confirmed that the Pima County Attorney supports efforts to require background checks for firearm purchases.

- Mr. Humphrey concluded his statement by noting that Pima County simply cannot continue to afford the human and economic cost of gun violence as evidenced by the information presented in the resolution. He noted that the resolution, which he also read aloud, was an important step in the public health based prevention process to reverse gun violence in the community.
- Mr. Humphrey read the draft resolution in full, and moved that the Pima County BOH support and forward the resolution to the Pima County BOS for their consideration and action.
- Dr. Horwitz seconded the motion, and inquired if Mr. Humphrey would be contacting his Supervisor from the BOS to sponsor the resolution. Mr. Humphrey noted that Supervisor Scott is willing to sponsor the resolution.
- Dr. Kohler noted that she does not see any evidence that prohibited possessors actually buy guns from unlicensed dealers at gun shows. Dr. Kohler does not feel that this resolution solves the problem, and believes that it puts an undue burden on people who are upstanding citizens who wish to sell a gun privately. This would limit their ability to do so because they are not firearms dealers, nor do they have access to do background checks.
- Dr. Horwitz inquired what the cost is to a private seller to do a background check. Mr. Humphrey advised that a private seller cannot access the background check system themselves as they are not FFL dealers. He also stated that private sellers can go through any FFL dealer and have a background check run for a nominal fee, and that this is already being done.
- Supervisor Heinz noted that this resolution will only apply to Pima County property, and would not be binding in a situation where a gun show had set up space on an adjacent piece of land where a private seller could potentially go to conduct their sale.
- Dr. Horwitz invited Mr. Mark Person, Program Manager at the PCHD, to speak on the topic.
- Mr. Person noted that it is really important to distinguish between people with mental illness, violent offenders, and people living with mental illness wrongly connected to violence, in particular as it related to the use of firearms. Mr. Person shared that the data shows that it is incredibly rare for an individual with mental illness to be associated with mass shootings or homicides, and it is typically not the mental illness that is the motivator or reason for that event. Mr. Person advised that it is more likely for a person with mental illness to be the victim of a firearm shooting, or that they die by suicide. Mr. Person noted that it is important to public health that the stigma associated with mental illness is a part of this conversation..
- Dr. Horwitz called for the vote on the motion that the Pima County BOH support and forward the resolution to the Pima County BOS for their consideration and action. The motion carried with one vote of 'no' and all the remaining votes in the affirmative.

## **8. PACC UPDATE**

- Dr. Horwitz introduced Ms. Monica Dangler, Director at the Pima Animal Care Center (PACC). Ms. Dangler began working at PACC as a Maddie's Executive Fellow in August 2018. After about a year, she became Deputy Director, and then moved up to interim Director after Kristen Hassen left that position, and was recently promoted to the permanent Director position.
- Ms. Dangler updated the BOH on what has been happening at PACC in the last 18 months. She noted that there is a strong focus on helping people who are struggling in different ways to keep their pets with the family.
  1. One of the programs that expanded was the pet support center, where people can get assistance with minor medical care for their pet, help finding pet-appropriate

housing, or advice on potty-training a puppy, for instance. This program has been able to help 47% of the pet support center clients keep their pet and not have to bring them to the shelter.

2. A new program started in January 2021 called the Safety Net Foster Program, which provides temporary boarding for their pet(s) and allows people to get the help they need, and may have put off, because they don't have anywhere for their pet to go. The program takes in about 30-45 pets each month; some can stay short-term at the shelter, while others are placed with foster homes until they can be reunited with their families.
- Supervisor Heinz asked what is the best way for the Safety Net Foster Program information to be provided to emergency room (ER) case managers, so that patients can be reassured about care options for their pets while they face a health emergency. Ms. Dangler indicated she would have the Safety Net Foster Program coordinator contact his office to provide the relevant information, and will check to see that all the area hospitals have that information.
  - Ms. Dangler noted that animal intake has been beginning to increase, and was high in July. PACC is backlogged from the increased July intake, and she mentioned there are various foster and adoption promotions currently available.

#### **9. FEDERAL VACCINE SURPLUS**

- Dr. Horwitz introduced the subject of COVID vaccines that are set to expire, and are likely to go to waste rather than be utilized in another county or jurisdiction. Dr. Horwitz asked Dr. Cullen if she is able to clarify the current policy regarding COVID vaccine expiration and utilization.
- Dr. Cullen advised that the issue was raised at the Pima County Health Department Ethics Committee in May 2021. At this time, there was a significant number of vaccines that were set to expire in 4-6 weeks, and Pima County, as well as the other U.S. – Mexico border Counties, supported exploring sharing these vaccines with Mexico. Dr. Cullen was asked to explore options for transferring vaccine to other counties where demand is high. Dr. Cullen worked with Dr. Richard Carmona to seek clarification on options for preventing vaccine wastage. PCHD was advised that vaccines remain federal property, and when they are not used, they are required under current policy to be returned to the regulating authority. Dr. Cullen advised that at least 10,000 vaccines have been wasted due to exceeding their expiration date.
- Dr. Horwitz inquired if there was any indication that, if there is excess vaccine in the future, the policy decision be revisited and possibly changed. Dr. Cullen responded that she was told that the policy would not change.
- Dr. Cullen mentioned that the government and the FDA have been working closely to evaluate whether the expiration dates for Moderna, Pfizer and J&J can be extended. Pfizer vaccine may get an extended shelf life soon, and that may limit the potential wastage of vaccines in the future. The White House announced recently that an additional booster shot for fully vaccinated people would be recommended after 8 months of completion of the first series. This would result in increased utilization and will hopefully prevent further vaccine wastage as well.
- Dr. Cullen noted that the issue of vaccination waste has been discussed at the PCHD Ethics Committee on several occasions. Mr. Humphrey inquired as to the number of vaccines in Pima County that may be at risk of expiring. Dr. Cullen advised that she could provide a number based on what vaccines PCHD controls, but not for other entities distributing vaccines in Pima County, and indicated she would find out the details and report later.

#### **10. EMERGENCY RESPONSE EXTREME HEAT COOLING CENTER**

- Dr. Horwitz introduced Mr. Louie Valenzuela, Division Manager for the Pima County Health Department Public Health Assessment Emergency Preparedness Division, who is presenting on this topic.
- Mr. Valenzuela mentioned that the BRACE grant was received and accepted, and the notice of award is expected sometime in September.
- The application has two areas of focus:
  1. Heat related illness impact to our healthcare system, to do targeted risk reduction and education for populations that are at risk;
  2. Cooling center network, building capacity; creating educational materials for at-risk individuals to access these places; and building neighborhood and community resiliency.
- Mr. Valenzuela used a PowerPoint presentation to illustrate the areas of focus; a copy of that presentation can be provided to the BOH members as requested. The report highlights the high/low temperatures from April, as well as ER visits related to heat impact. This information will allow forecasting to be done. Part of the equation understands the demographic breakdowns for individuals presenting to hospital ER departments, such as age, occupation, geographic areas, etc. This demographic breakdown will then inform capacity requirements for the cooling center network, and the ability to expand into areas that are disproportionately impacted. Pima County has approved an expansion of the cooling center network at the Pima County Libraries, and the Pima County Natural Resources, Parks and Recreation facilities.
- Mr. Valenzuela mentioned that the intent is to establish community partnerships to build resiliency hubs throughout the County. A resiliency hub is a safe place for residents to come in, and will focus on resilience solutions for, and mitigate the impact of, public health threats. This may include providing people affected who have limited resources social service supports through the County, such as access to information, Wi-Fi, economic support and job aid.
- Mr. Valenzuela advised that the goal is to make policy change and make this system versatile so that the extreme weather issues we have seen in southern Arizona can be addressed, including expanding the winter sheltering program facilitated by the Tucson Planning Council for the Homeless.
- Mr. Humphrey inquired if there is any talk about assisting homeowners to repair or replace their swamp coolers, or air conditioners, so they can stay in their own homes. Mr. Valenzuela indicated that that is something that has been considered as part of the larger strategy, and speaks more to the housing and development services and partners that will need to be coordinated.

#### **11. ETHICS COMMITTEE UPDATE – STANDING ITEM**

- Ms. Jennie Mullins, Administrative Support Services Manager at Pima County Health Department, provided an update from the Ethics Committee.
- In addition to discussions covering the Federal Vaccine Surplus issue, as well as the Emergency Response to Extreme Heat, the Ethics Committee has been exploring the ethical consideration in providing COVID vaccine cash incentives to people who are unhoused, or experiencing homelessness. Discussion focused on the unintended consequences of providing cash incentives for vaccinations to the unhoused. Concerns included providing cash incentives could put people experiencing homelessness at greater risk for their safety and may lead to individuals seeking more than the recommended number of vaccinations for cash. The group decided that given cash incentives are becoming standard practice to address hesitancy among various groups and communities, that it would not be appropriate to recommend restricting this practice for this population.

They agreed to continue to watch the issue through agencies working with the unhoused and homeless coalitions.

- R. Humphrey inquired if there was any discussion of a cash incentive being provided to anyone who has not received a COVID vaccine, not just the unhoused/homeless coalition. Ms. Mullins responded that the opportunity is available through a PCHD partner, Partners In Health, who received HRSA funding to provide cash incentives for high risk unvaccinated Pima County residents. She noted that it is probably not enough funding to provide everyone a cash incentive, but it could be used especially in the underserved communities and communities where there is high social vulnerability.
- Ms. Mullins noted there has been discussion regarding reduced hospital capacity and workforce shortages, and the impact that this can potentially have on prioritization for treatment of patients who have respiratory issues. A small working group will be convened to look at new guidance around crisis care standards so that there is a public health ethical lens on that, s for Pima County.

**12. DECLARING RACIAL & ETHNIC INEQUITIES & INCOME INEQUALITY IN PIMA COUNTY TO BE A PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS – STANDING ITEM**

- Dr. Cullen noted that racial and ethnic inequities, and income inequality, continue to be embedded in the PCHD approach. Dr. Cullen assured the BOH members that the BOS resolution continues to inform the work being done with this goal. PCHD is creating a Health Equity Office to improve our public health response, and a health equity plan is being vetted internally. Dr. Cullen will provide the health equity plan to the Board when it is finalized. Dr. Cullen also mentioned that PCHD will be doing department-wide training for health equity over the next 18 months.

**13. SUMMATION OF ACTION ITEMS & PROPOSAL OF FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS**

- Dr. Horwitz reminded the members to email him with any items that need to go on the next meeting agenda.

**14. ADJOURNMENT**

The motion was made and seconded (Dr. Kohler/Ms. Trowbridge) that the August 18, 2021 meeting adjourn. Motion carried unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 5:02 P.M.

The next meeting is scheduled for September 15, 2021, at 3:00 P.M.